

First Annual Report to NOAA Office of Global Programs

Project Title: Climate Change Information for Urban Policy and Decision Making

Principal Investigators:

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Period covered by this report: 15 September 2002 to 31 March 2003

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Adjustment of Project Start Date

This award was made in late August 2002, and the investigators began work on the project in mid-September 2002. As a consequence, this first annual report covers about six months of work rather than a full year. These months have been very important because they lay the groundwork for the work of the project over the next year and a half.

Summary of Activities

The PI's, who all have different disciplinary backgrounds, have met on a regular basis over this period both for project planning and to pool their understanding of issues that must be considered in conveying climate change information to public officials, the private sector, and the non-governmental public sector. Members of the research team have made presentations at these meetings on their specialties, such as new developments in regional climate modeling, the study of information access and use by individuals, and the development of on-line information systems. In addition, the project team has identified their individual responsibilities in the focus group meetings and has begun to plan for the focus groups. In order to ensure that participants in the focus groups have sufficient understanding of major issues in climate change, its anticipated impacts on urban and metropolitan areas, and the meaning of climate projections, the PI's decided to work within a modified focus group framework that consists of both presentations to the participants and moderated discussion on major issues related to climate change information needs and patterns of use.

The group developed a lengthy project research protocol for obtaining information in both the focus groups and personal interviews on how individuals seek information about climate change, how they use such information, and in what forms the information is most useful to them. This protocol was informed by previous experience of the PI's in

working with New York metropolitan area stakeholders and in studying patterns of environmental information use in related projects. The protocol, together with the Informed Consent Forms that the PI's developed for use in the focus groups and personal interviews, was submitted to the Columbia University Institutional Review Board for approval.

The project team discussed membership on the Project Advisory Committee at length and has identified individuals whose experience and responsibilities span several of the following areas: climate change, environmental change, public policy, transportation, and coastal processes. The investigators also wanted to have representation from several levels of government decision making, including the Federal government, multi-state government agencies, and local government. Half the individuals identified have already agreed to serve on the PAC and we expect to recruit the other half in the next several weeks. The PAC will assist the investigators in reviewing the focus group strategy and identifying people for the focus groups and individual interviews. They will also serve as beta testers for components of the information system as they are developed.

In addition to the above activities, members of the project research team have begun research on the use of climate forecasts and predictions and the role of information in decision making. This research will inform the structure of the information system. They have also begun the process of identifying documents, information, data, and models to be included on the prototype information system. Because of the strong interest in developing information that can be used in other projects related to the application of scientific information to management, policy, and decision making, the project research team has also decided to propose a paper on models of information use and the role of information in decision making at the Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of Global Change Community in Montreal in the fall.

Accomplishments to Date

The project was certified by the Columbia University Institutional Review Board on 25 February 2003 and can now initiate the focus group discussions.

The research protocol and strategy for focus groups has been finalized.

Half the members of the Project Advisory Committee have been recruited.

Research has begun on elements of the information system.

The project PI participated in the Human Dimensions PI meeting in South Carolina in October 2003.